

3 January 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Personnel

SUBJECT: Proposed Agency Policy for Captured Personnel

1. Attached for your consideration is the report prepared by this working committee concerning proposed Agency policy in connection with captured Agency personnel. The committee has met regularly on a weekly basis since the date of its establishment and feels that it has given intensive consideration to the subject assigned to it. The stated objective of this committee was to review, insofar as possible, current material relating to cases of prisoners of war and other captured personnel, and on the basis of this review to recommend to the senior committee a proposed Agency policy covering "captured" personnel. A general program designed to prepare Agency employees so that they might effectively carry out such a policy was to be included in this report. This committee has conducted such a review including case histories and documentary material both official and unofficial pertaining to the prisoner of war question. In this connection, considerable reference has been made to the complete report of the Secretary of Defense's Advisory Committee on Prisoners of War.

2. The attached report is designed to serve as a basis for establishing a definite Agency policy covering captured personnel. Detailed issuances drawn within the framework of the proposed policies are obviously subject to change since changes in Communist leaders and practices often have a direct bearing on Communist attitudes toward

"foreign elements." Consequently, Agency policy in this matter must permit flexibility in order that we may adopt counter measures to meet such changes as may occur.

3. Additionally, it is our belief that any policy which may be adopted concerning captured personnel must be understood and accepted by any board of inquiry appointed in an individual case to be a guide, establishing the conduct which this Agency should expect of its personnel. Boards of inquiry which may be appointed should have authority to waive adherence to these principles of conduct only where the circumstances of the individual case justify action which is not strictly in accordance with the proposed principles of conduct.

4. The working group has not recommended policy statements relating to punitive measures against persons who violate these principles. Discussions revolving about this question led this group to the conclusion that the evaluation of existing legal processes to achieve this end was beyond the scope of their immediate capabilities. However, it is their opinion that personnel assigned to risk-of-capture areas should fully understand that all acts committed and/or statements made by them while in custody will be reviewed by competent officials of the Agency in the light of the circumstances surrounding their detention.

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1. The committee has taken as its objective the development of policy statements which, if implemented, will maximize the defense of security information known to Agency personnel in forward operating areas.

2. These statements fall into two major categories: (1) those pertaining to responsibilities assumed by the Agency; (2) those pertaining to responsibilities assumed by the employee. "Agency personnel" as used in this statement refers to staff employees and staff agents.

3. It is almost self-evident that the Agency should exercise caution and care in assigning personnel to overseas areas and/or missions where risk of capture is possible. Persons even on TDY status who have knowledge of benefit to the opposition ideally should never be placed in a position where risk of capture exists. On the other hand, operating demands sometimes necessitate some compromise with this ideal. Moreover, risk of capture is not an all or nothing matter; it varies both in time and place. Therefore, it shall be the policy of this Agency:

To assign Agency personnel to overseas areas only after the
(a) risks of capture and (b) possible damage to the Agency
in event of capture do not overbalance (c) the possible benefits
to the Agency that may accrue from such assignment.

4. Agency personnel become increasingly competent as they gain in trade-craft skills and knowledge about the Agency. Personnel policies, encouraging rotation of employees from headquarters to field stations, or from one operating area to another, are designed to extend the capabilities of the Agency as a whole. Furthermore, the motivation of operating people is often

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enhanced by knowledge about "the big picture," the chief objectives and goals of a project. However, these policies run in conflict with ideal intelligence principles, particularly that of need-to-know. Again from an ideal intelligence standpoint, activities in risk-of-capture areas should be conducted by persons knowing the least about Agency Operations but highly skilled in trade-craft. Therefore, it shall be the policy of this Agency:

Wherever possible, Agency employees shall be assigned to stations and missions in such a manner that risk-of-capture diminishes as knowledge of Agency Operations increases.

5. Persons in areas where risk-of-capture is great, obviously need a solid basic cover story. These legends must be perfected beyond present Agency standards and adequately supported through carefully conceived back-stopping measures. If the individual is captured, it must be recognized that the cover story has a high probability of eventually being destroyed no matter how ingeniously it is backstopped and conforms with some truthful facts. The defense against this possibility is a series of variations within the framework of the basic legend. Therefore, it shall be the policy of this Agency:

That every Agency employee prior to exposure to risk-of-capture shall be trained in a cover story and variations on it that conform to sound intelligence-defense doctrine.

6. Agency employees, in general, are motivated to evade capture. Certainly a deliberate defection to the enemy would be grounds for treason charges. Therefore, it shall be the policy of this Agency that:

Every Agency person, if caught in a dangerous situation, will attempt to avoid capture by all means at his command.

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7. The overwhelming evidence concerning persons who have been captured is that methods can be applied to force even the most resolute person to reveal information. Furthermore, sound intelligence operating principles call for initiating, where possible, corrective steps on the assumption that vital information has been or will shortly be compromised after the capture of an Agency person. To impose an unbending insistence that captured persons should withhold all information indefinitely is both a hazard to the person's mental stability and unessential for Agency operation. The practice of providing Agency personnel with cover stories is based on the assumption that those persons may be coerced into talking at some time.

This "cover story" ideally should be based on a completely developed "cover life" of considerable intensity and focus. The ramifications and details, persons involved, situations engendered, should appear to be valid and authentic. When, therefore, the individual is taken into custody, his account of his covert activities should be plausible and ready for exposure with a fund of elaboration. The history as given to his captors should be restricted to the cover aspects of his life and to no other. If necessary, and after a suitable show of resistance, the prisoner may be allowed to sign a deposition confessing to "crimes" arising out of his "cover story." The only information that CIA prisoners may properly impart to the enemy are the facts and details of the "cover story." Communication on any other aspect is prohibited, and any such will end in disaster for the individual and the service. This should be the policy for the prisoner even in the face of discrepancies detected by the enemy, and even when clear-cut evidence of the covert activity of the agent is in the enemy's hands. Covert activities by the prisoner or others should never be admitted or confirmed by Agency personnel.

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The chief defense objective is to impede and, if possible, to thwart the interrogation process. This may be accomplished by adhering to the confines of the "cover story" with many details and by overloading the interrogators with a wealth of inconsequential non-classified information whose accuracy must be checked. Various devices, such as feigning illness, exhaustion or collapse demanding medical attention, can sometimes be effective. If some classified information falls into the hands of the enemy, the interests of the Agency and of the individual will be served best by the prisoner's consistent refusal to confirm this information and denial of knowledge about it. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the Agency that:

Captured Agency personnel will use their cover stories to impede, divert and confuse their interrogators and will use every means at their command to protect all sensitive material known to them.

8. Captured Agency personnel have a responsibility to contrive opportunities for escape and to attempt escape when success is likely. Pseudo-cooperation such as cooperation with prison rules, obedience to the captor's regulations, courtesies and feigned acceptance of indoctrination, even to the extent of public utterances consistent with the "cover story", may gain those freedoms and privileges that make escape possible. In some cases captured Americans have been physically tortured, not to elicit information, but because they had ignored, disregarded or violated the prison routines and regulations. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the Agency that:

Any captured Agency person will attempt to escape using any means at his command including pseudo-cooperative (as defined above) activities as a means of obtaining escape opportunities

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so long as these activities do not carry a threat to the welfare of other U.S. captives.

9. The Agency has the responsibility for equipping all employees entering risk-of-capture areas with adequate knowledge and skills to minimize possibility of capture and maximize their defenses against the rigors of captivity. Returned captives have repeatedly given evidence that knowledge of what to expect in captivity would in itself have a strong passive defense. Much is now known concerning the enemy's practices and policies vis-a-vis captives and some active defensive measures have been developed. It is not feasible to train all persons to the same degree in these respects, but minimal standards should be established for all persons entering risk-of-capture areas. The training should be made progressively intensive as the individual's knowledge of Agency's Operations and his risk of capture increases. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the Agency:

To acquaint all Agency personnel entering risk-of-capture areas, with methods to evade capture and resist interrogation. Those entering high risk-of-capture areas must be intensively trained and demonstrate their proficiency in the use of defenses against revealing classified information.

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APPENDIX

1. The policy statements proposed in the foregoing report will be ineffective, if adopted, unless supported by a number of interlocking concrete measures. Training to avoid capture and counteract interrogation and indoctrination is the most obvious need. The working committee, however, believed that a number of less obvious needs also exist of which the following are suggestive but not exhaustive.

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2. Project [REDACTED] after reviewing existing interrogation and persuasion methods, concluded in 1953 "that the most important feature of indoctrination and protection against persuasion are high morale and firm discipline. These strengthen those features of human nature that may, when weak, be exploited by the enemy." This statement makes clear that defensive measures must begin early in a person's Agency career. Furthermore, all efforts, or the lack thereof, to build esprit de corps will have direct repercussions on the Agency's capabilities to protect itself and its information. Basic to the effectiveness of any principles of conduct is a strong morale focussed upon CIA and its mission. This means that every member should be indissolubly identified with the group and its value systems. Such strong morale can best be created where traditions, pride of service, internal prestige, and group loyalties are integral parts of an Agency career. The Agency should periodically re-examine itself to ascertain whether these ingredients are inherent in its organization.

3. Because of the nature of intelligence work, public acclaim or wide spread public notice cannot be accorded outstanding performances. This limitation makes it all the more appropriate to give special recognition within the

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confines of Agency security. One concrete suggestion to this end is to establish a Court or Hall of Honor containing memorials or plaques to CIA employees who have died, been killed and/or decorated in line of duty. Such a place could aid in establishing a sense of duty and responsibility by being used for swearing in new employees, decoration ceremonies and other honorific occasions.

4. One of the significant conclusions from debriefings of returned prisoners is the sense of moral and psychological isolation engendered by the opposition to undermine a man's resistance. The Agency must develop and exploit all possible means for communicating with prisoners to counteract the feeling of helplessness. The Agency should continue its efforts to inform personnel of the benefits to themselves and their families that will accrue in the event of capture or death.

5. A vigorous training program needs to be developed not merely on the technique level but on the level of the opposition's basic attitude toward prisoners of war and war criminals. This Agency possesses much intelligence regarding the communist purposes in gaining "confessions," their concepts of legality, and the cultural differences in attitudes toward prisoners. However, this intelligence is incomplete and only partially integrated. It is the feeling of this working group that an essential first step prior to establishing a training program on the ideational level is the codification and integration of such intelligence.

6. One feature of Communist legal systems is the requirement that a signed deposition be obtained from the prisoner describing his "crimes." The prisoner's case is considered incomplete unless such a deposition is obtained. A protest of innocence is not acceptable because Communist secret police do

not arrest persons unless they consider them to be a threat to the state or the party and, therefore, by Communist definition, criminals. "Confessions of crimes" obtained by the Communist police may be used publicly. Although such confessions have both internal and external propaganda value, the U.S. government at large can more effectively negate that propaganda than can the individual. On the other hand, the intelligence contained in confessions may be damaging to U.S. interests. Therefore, it is essential that ideational training emphasize the motivation for extracting confessions as viewed from the captor's vantage point so the prisoner can manipulate the situation more intelligently to protect the classified information he possesses and the welfare of his fellow prisoners.

7. The training program clearly should embrace familiarization with various specific communist interrogation techniques, the stages through which they progress, and the most probable short-range objective each technique is designed to achieve. Although the fundamental thesis of these recommendations is that every person must "talk" to some extent, and therefore reveal some information, it is also the thesis that this information need not be classified, and that the interrogation process can be successfully prolonged, and can even be defeated. The possibilities of delay are enhanced if the captive knows in advance what to expect and what kinds of behavior may legitimately be expected of persons in his status so he can fortify himself and act accordingly. The prospect of the unknown and the feeling of uncertainty is often more fearsome than the actual experience.

8. Proper training can develop skill in confounding interrogation. It is the belief of the working group that such training will be most effective

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if it emphasizes high loyalty standards, ingenuity, and artful dodges rather than physical stamina and torture tolerance. Those persons who may be charged with direct responsibility for planning and executing such courses will find many helpful suggestions to this end in the Documentation of the Secretary of Defense's Advisory Committee on Prisoners of War (July 1955).

9. Nothing in these statements should be construed as supplanting current training in escape and evasion, or interrogation methods. Integration of what is suggested herein with present courses may prove desirable.

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